

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W

----- 020275

O R 161801Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5063

INFO AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMCONSUL MONTREAL

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 PARIS 27131

EXDIS

DEPT PASS USDEL SECRETARY

SECRETARY'S PARTY FOR EAGLEBURGER

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS

SUBJECT: POST-MORTEM ON TWA HIJACKING

REFS: (A) STATE 227327; (B) PARIS 26929

1. REF (B), WHICH WAS PREPARED PRIOR RECEIPT OF
REF (A), CONTAINS DETAILED ACCOUNT OF PARIS PHASE OF
TWA HIJACKING AND, PARTICULARLY IN ITS PARAGRAPHS
SIX AND SEVEN, TOUCHES ON MOST OF THE POINTS RAISED
IN REF (A).

2. OUR COMMENTS ADDRESSED SPECIFICALLY TO THE FIVE
NUMBERED POINTS IN REF (A) HEREWITHE:

(1) COMMAND AND CONTROL.

A. OUR COMMAND POST OPERATION, BOTH IN THE CHANCERY
AND AT CHARLES DE GAULLE (CDG) WORKED REMARKABLY
SMOOTHLY. THERE WERE SOME PROBLEMS OF VOICE COMMUNI-
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CATION WITH WASHINGTON AND OF INTERFACE BETWEEN

WASHINGTON/PARIS COMMAND AND THE FRENCH. EACH OF THESE PROBLEMS WILL BE DEVELOPED FURTHER BELOW. "COMMAND" AT THIS END WAS, ULTIMATELY, IN THE HANDS OF THE FRENCH, FOR THE HIJACKING HAD TERMINATED ON THEIR TERRITORY AND, AS THE DEPARTMENT ITSELF HAD STRESSED, THE DECISION ON HOW THEN TO DEAL WITH THE HIJACKING WAS UP TO THE FRENCH. THIS BEING SAID, THE FRENCH, WHILE THEY DID NOT SOLICIT OUR INTERVENTION, DID NONETHELESS ACCEPT IT (ACCEPT HAVING IT FORCED UPON THEM MIGHT BE A BETTER WAY OF PUTTING IT) AT CRITICAL JUNCTURES, AND IT IS EVIDENT THAT THE AMBASSADOR'S ROLE IN THE CONTROL TOWER AT CDG WAS DECISIVE IN CONTRIBUTING TO THE HAPPY OUTCOME AND IN AVOIDING WHAT MIGHT WELL HAVE OTHERWISE RESULTED IN SOME BLOODSHED. RELATIONS WITH THE FRENCH WERE DIFFICULT, AND THE SITUATION COULD SO EASILY HAVE GONE AWRY. THAT IT DID NOT IS PROBABLY THE RESULT OF THE CLOSE COORDINATION BETWEEN THE EMBASSY AND THE WASHINGTON COMMAND CENTERS, RESULTING IN THE JOINT DECISION OF AMBASSADORS HECK AND RUSH THAT THE LATTER SHOULD IMMEDIATELY PROCEED TO CDG TO BE AVAILABLE ON THE SPOT IN CASE OF NEED.

B. THE EVOLUTION OF THE SITUATION FROM THE NATIONAL TO THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL AND TO A MULTI-NATIONAL FOCUS, OCCURRED AS SOON AS THE HIJACKED AIRCRAFT HEADED OUT OF U.S. AIRSPACE. AS THE HIJACKED AIRCRAFT WAS ENROUTE TO GANDER U.S. AUTHORITIES MAY NOT HAVE KNOWN AT THE TIME WHAT THE AIRCRAFT'S SPECIFIC ITINERARY WOULD BE AFTER SUBSEQUENT REFUELING AT KEFLAVIK. HOWEVER, SOME EARLY ALERT SHOULD HAVE BEEN GIVEN TO POSTS THAT MIGHT CONCEIVABLY FIND THEMSELVES, AS THEY DID, DIRECTLY CAUGHT UP IN THE HIJACKING. WE LEARNED OF THE TWA HIJACKING ONLY THROUGH NEWS REPORTS ON SEPTEMBER 10 AND THEN IT WAS FROM FAA BRUSSELS AND TWA THAT WE WERE ALERTED ON THE MORNING OF SEPTEMBER 11 THAT THE AIRCRAFT MIGHT HEAD TOWARD LONDON AND PARIS AFTER THE KEFLAVIK REFUELING. AS IT WAS, WE THUS RECEIVED ADEQUATE ADVANCE WARNING ENABLING US TO BEGIN PROMPTLY SETTING UP OUR SUPPORT OPERATIONS. HOWEVER, THIS MIGHT NOT ALWAYS BE THE CASE HERE OR AT

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OTHER POSTS. THE DEPARTMENT MAY THEREFORE WISH TO GIVE SOME THOUGHT TO ESTABLISHING A RULE FOR FLASHING IMMEDIATE ALERTS TO SELECTED POSTS AS SOON AS IT BECOMES EVIDENT THAT A DOMESTIC U.S. HIJACKING MIGHT BECOME INTERNATIONAL AND FOLLOW UP WITH SUCCESSIVE ALERTS TO THE EXTENT THE POSSIBLE ITINERARY OF THE AIRCRAFT BECOMES KNOWN.

(2) COMMUNICATIONS.

AS INDICATED IN REF (B), VOICE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

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AMCONSUL MONTREAL

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

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PARIS AND WASHINGTON LEFT MUCH TO BE DESIRED. QUALITY OF SERVICE WAS ERRATIC. WHILE SOME PHONE CONVERSATIONS WERE CLEAR, CIRCUITS FOR OTHER CONVERSATIONS WERE SO BAD AS TO MAKE CONVERSATION ALMOST UNINTELLIGIBLE. IN ONE OR TWO CASES WE HAD TO REPLACE THE CALL IN HOPE OF GETTING A BETTER CIRCUIT, THUS LOSING VALUABLE TIME, ONLY TO FIND THAT THE NEW CIRCUIT WAS LITTLE BETTER. AS IT WORKED OUT THIS WAS NOT AN IMPEDIMENT TO SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION OF THIS HIJACKING, BUT THIS MIGHT NOT BE THE CASE IN OTHER EMERGENCY SITUATIONS WHERE THE ABSENCE OF RAPIDLY ESTABLISHED, SATISFACTORY VOICE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE POST AND THE DEPARTMENT COULD BE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SUCCESS AND FAILURE, BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH.

A. WE SUGGEST THE DEPARTMENT LOOK INTO THE REASONS FOR THE POOR QUALITY OF VOICE COMMUNICATION (I.E. WHETHER THE RESULT OF USE OF PARTICULAR CIRCUITS--

EUCOM OR LONDON TOLL--AT PARTICULAR TIMES OR FOR WHATEVER OTHER REASON) AND CONSIDER WHETHER THOUGHT SHOULD BE GIVEN TO UPGRADING THE POTENTIAL FOR CLEAR VOICE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PARIS AND WASHINGTON AT LEAST DURING EMERGENCY SITUATIONS. OUR COMMUNICATIONS BY PHONE WITH FAA BURSSELS WERE REPID AND OF GOOD QUALITY, AND SINCE FAA BURSSELS WAS LINKED TO THE FAA COMM

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CENTER BY AN OPEN LINE WHICH, WE UNDERSTAND, WAS OF GOOD QUALITY, THIS PROVED TO BE THE BEST AND MOST EXPEDITIOUS MANNER FOR PASSING AND RECEIVING INFORMATION. WE DISCOVERED, FOR EXAMPLEN THAT IT WAS MUCH FASTER TO PASS WORD TO AMBASSADOR HECK VIA FAA BURSSELS TO THE FAA COMM CENTER AND TO RECEIVE AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT THAN FOR US TO SEE TO PLACE A PHONE CALL DIRECTLY TO AMBASSADOR HECK. INQUIRIES SHOULD BE MADE TO ASCERTAIN WHY IT PROVED IMPOSSIBLE TO ESTABLISH A THREE-WAY CONFERENCE LINE AMONG THE EMBASSY, FAA BRUSSELS, AND THE FAA COMM CENTER AS FAA WASHINGTON AT ONE POINT SUGGESTED.

B. WE ALSO SUGGEST THAT IN THE EVENT OF SUCH CONSISTENTLY POOR QUALITY VOICE COMMUNICATION, CONSIDERATION MIGHT BE GIVEN TO SETTING UP A TELECONFERENCE BETWEEN THE OPERATIONS CENTER AND THE EMBASSY CODE ROOM, WITH MESSAGES BEING TRANSMITTED ON DEDICATED WIRES BETWEEN THESE TWO POINTS.

(3) RELATIONS WITH AND ROLE OF HOST GOVERNMENT.

A. AS IS ABUNDANTLY EVIDENT FROM REF (B), RELATIONS WITH THE HOST GOVERNMENT PROVED TO BE THE MOST DIFFICULT PROBLEM OF ALL. WE DID NOT MEET WITH READY COOPERATION FROM THE FRENCH; THEY WERE OBSTRUCTIVE OF OUR EFFORTS (JUST AS THEY MAY HAVE THOUGHT THAT WE WERE PERHAPS BEING OBSTRUCTIVE OF THEIRS); AND IN SOME INSTANCES WE WERE FED INFORMATION BY FRENCH OFFICIALS (NOTABLY GEN. WALTER) THAT LATER PROVED INCORRECT. ONE HAD THE IMPRESSION AT THE TIME, THOUGH THIS MAY BE OVER-GENERALIZING, THAT THE FRENCH WERE AFTER BLOOD, AND DOMESTIC CONCERN OVER CRIME, MOUNTING PUBLICITY OVER MUGGINGS IN THE PARIS SUBWAY, AND PERHAPS CONCERN FOR A PUBLIC IMAGE DEMONSTRATING THAT THEY COULD BE AS TOUGH AS THE ISRAELIS, MAY HAVE BEEN MOTIVATING FORCES BEHIND THE FRENCH POSITION. BE THAT AS IT MAY, OUR DIALOGUE WITH MOST FRENCH SERVICES JUST BEFORE AND DURING THE GROUND OPERATIONS IN PARIS WAS HARDLY CHARACTERIZED BY DESIRE FOR COOPERATION AND CONCERN OVER HUMANITARIAN CONSIDERATIONS ON THE FRENCH SIDE. AS NOTED IN REF (B), AT NO TIME DID THE FRENCH INITIATE ANY CON-

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TACT WITH US OR EVEN APPRISE US OF PLANS THAT COULD AFFECT AMERICAN LIVES AND PROPERTY. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT INTERIOR MINISTER PONIATOWSKI WAS RUNNING THE OPERATION ON THE FRENCH SIDE, AND HE MAY HAVE REMAINED IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH PRIME MINISTER BARRE AND PRESIDENT Giscard. WHEN THE AMBASSADOR TELEPHONED TO PONIATOWSKI ON TWO OCCASIONS BY TELEPHONE, PONIATOWSKI PROVED REASONABLE AND IMMEDIATELY RESPONDED AFFIRMATIVELY. HOWEVER, THERE CERTAINLY WAS A CONSIDERABLE GULF IN COMMUNICATION AND CONFIDENCE BETWEEN US AND THE FRENCH AT LOWER LEVELS. ONE PROBLEM WAS THAT UNDER PONIATOWSKI THERE WAS NO ONE POINT OF CONTACT ON THE FRENCH SIDE WITH WHOM WE COULD DEAL WHO SEEMED TO HAVE ANY FLEXIBILITY IN POWER OF DECISION OR, IN SOME CASES, EVEN TO BE IN POSSESSION OF ALL THE REQUISITE INFORMATION FOR COPING WITH A SUDDEN DEVELOPMENT IN A FAST-MOVING SITUATION. THE CASE OF GEN. WALTER, WHO IS OSTENSIBLY IN CHARGE OF SECURITY IN THE DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL

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AVIATION (DGAC), IS AN UNHAPPY CASE IN POINT. WHILE HE SERVES IN AN ADVISORY CAPACITY AND DOES NOT HIMSELF HAVE ANY JURISDICTION OVER SECURITY FORCES THAT GIVE MUSCLE TO SECURITY MEASURES THAT ARE ORDERED, ONE WOULD THINK THAT NORMALLY HIS WOULD HAVE BEEN A KEY ROLE IN INTERFACE WITHIN THE GOF BETWEEN THE CIVAIR ESTABLISHMENT AND THE SECURITY FORCES UNDER CONTROL OF THE INTERIOR MINISTRY, AND IN INTERFACE BETWEEN THE GOF AND OURSELVES. HE, OR SOMEONE FROM HIS OFFICE, OUGHT TO HAVE BEEN AT CDG, IN OUR VIEW, AND WOULD HAVE BEEN THE NATURAL FOCAL POINT OF CONTACT FOR US THERE FOR ON-THE-SPOT LIAISON WITH THE FRENCH. AS IT WAS, GEN. WALTER STAYED AT HIS HOME THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE HIJACKING INCIDENT, AND THE DGAC SEEMS TO HAVE PLAYED NO ROLE WHATEVER ON THE FRENCH SIDE IN THE ACTIVITIES AT CDG. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE LIAISON OFFICER OF THE DST (DIRECTION DE LA SURVEILLANCE DU TERRITOIRE) PROVED MOST HELPFUL TO US FROM THE MOMENT HE WAS FIRST CONTACTED IN MID-AFTERNOON ON SEPT. 11. HE SUPPLIED US WITH THE NAMES OF THE HIJACKERS (IMMEDIATELY FORWARDED TO DEPARTMENT THROUGH SCF

- CHANNELS), A COPY OF THE DROPPED PROPAGANDA LEAFLET, AND ATTEMPTED TO KEEP US INFORMED ABOUT FRENCH POLICY AS IT EVOLVED. INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH, ON HIS RETURN

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FROM NEW YORK (HE HAD ACCOMPANIED THE HIJACKERS ON THE FRENCH MILITARY PLANE), HE REPORTED HIS VIEW THAT THE GOF HANDLING OF THIS CASE WAS REGARDED AS FULLY CONSISTENT WITH U.S. POLICY IN SUCH CASES.

B. LOOKING TO THE FUTURE, WE MAY WISH TO EXPLORE WITH THE GOF WAYS FOR DESIGNATING AN INDIVIDUAL OR POSITION WITH WHOM U.S. REPRESENTATIVES COULD WORK IN EXCHANGING INFORMATION AND COORDINATING EFFORTS. WHILE WE MIGHT EXPECT THIS POSITION TO BE IN THE DGAC, THIS IS A GOF MATTER CONCERNING INTERNAL ORGANIZATION AND DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITY. WE TRIED TO WORK WITH AND THROUGH THE FRENCH CIVIL AIR AUTHORITIES, THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR, AND THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, BUT IN POINT OF FACT THE ONLY TIMES WE WERE ABLE TO ELICIT A GENUINE FRENCH RESPONSE WAS WHEN THE AMBASSADOR TALKED TO THE MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR. THUS, THERE IS NO DOUBT AN EXCEEDINGLY DELICATE QUESTION OF DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY INVOLVED, WHICH WE CANNOT EASILY CHALLENGE WITH MUCH HOPE OF DOING OTHER THAN RUFFLING FEATHERS.

(4) WASHINGTON BACKSTOPPING.

A. WE HAVE ALREADY MADE COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS CONCERNING POSSIBLE IMPROVEMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS UNDER (2) ABOVE.

B. IN MID-AFTERNOON ON SEPTEMBER 11 THE OPERATIONS CENTER INFORMED US THAT WE NEED NOT BOTHER WORRYING ABOUT TELEGRAPHIC REPORTING. THIS WAS A WISE DECISION, SINCE VOICE COMMUNICATION WAS FASTER ANYWAY, EMBASSY COMMAND POST PERSONNEL WERE FAR TOO PREOCCUPIED TO TAKE TIME OUT FOR DRAFTING, AND ON THE ONE OCCASION WE DID BEGIN A DRAFT CABLE IT WAS OVERTAKEN SO RAPIDLY BY EVENTS THAT WE ABANDONED THE EFFORT. WE FOUND IT WORKED BEST FOR US TO BE FEEDING INFORMATION DIRECTLY INTO WASHINGTON (BOTH OP CENTER AND FAA CONTROL CENTER) WITH OP CENTER THEN TAKING STEPS TO NOTIFY OTHER POSTS AS NEEDED. WE BELIEVE THIS IS SOP IN ANY CASE AND ALSO BELIEVE THIS PROCEDURE SHOULD BE CONTINUED.

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C. IT WAS MOST HELPFUL TO HAVE GUIDANCE CONTINUOUSLY AVAILABLE FROM OP CENTER.

(5) POLICY.

A. WE HAD NO PROBLEM IN INTERPRETING AND IMPLEMENTING U.S. POLICY ON TERRORISM, THOUGH WE FOUND WE HAD CONSTANTLY TO BE ON GUARD AGAINST MEDIA EFFORTS TO MAKE IT LOOK AS IF, OR HAVE US SAY THAT, THE USG WAS INTERVENING AND NEGOTIATING. ON THIS POINT, HOWEVER, THERE WAS ALWAYS COMPLETE USG/GOF IDENTITY OF VIEWS; THE DECISIONS WERE FOR THE FRENCH TO TAKE. THIS BEING OUR POLICY, THE QUESTION ARISES AS TO THE EXTENT WE CAN OR SHOULD VOLUNTEER ADVICE AND SUGGESTIONS TO THE HOST GOVERNMENT ON WHAT ITS DECISIONS SHOULD BE, ESPECIALLY AT MOMENTS WHEN THE HOST GOVERNMENT, MINDFUL OF ITS OWN OBLIGATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES, MIGHT ITSELF BE VERY PREOCCUPIED WITH THE EMERGENCY

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AND NOT ESPECIALLY PARTIAL TO SECOND-GUESSING FROM OTHER PARTIES. MUCH DEPENDS HERE, OBVIOUSLY, ON THE SOPHISTICATION AND TEMPERAMENT OF THE HOST GOVERNMENT IN A GIVEN CASE. THERE WERE AT LEAST TWO INSTANCES DURING THE TWA HIJACKING WHEN IT WAS SUGGESTED WE MIGHT ADVISE THE FRENCH ON WHICH DECISION TO TAKE. IN EACH CASE, OUR SUGGESTIONS WERE NOT NECESSARY SINCE THE FRENCH HAD ALREADY TAKEN THE RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION ENTIRELY ON THEIR OWN. THE TWO INSTANCES: AN FAA/W SUGGESTION THAT THE FRENCH BE TOLD TO ISOLATE THE HIJACKED AIRCRAFT; AND AN OPCENTER PSYCHIATRIST'S RECOMMENDATION THAT THE HIJACKER "JULIE" BE DENIED PERMISSION TO RETURN TO THE AIRCRAFT. THE QUESTION OBVIOUSLY IS WHETHER, HAVING STATED THAT THE DECISION ON HOW TO DEAL WITH THE HIJACKING IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE OTHER STATE, WE SHOULD REFRAIN FROM SEEKING TO INTERFERE UNLESS ASKED, PAINFUL OR DIFFICULT AS THAT MAY BE UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES.

B. OUR DIFFICULTIES WITH THE FRENCH, SUCH AS THEY WERE, CONCERNED OUR DESIRE TO MAKE THEM FULLY AWARE OF, AND TO TAKE FULLY INTO ACCOUNT, OUR DEEP CONCERN FOR THE WELFARE OF THE AMERICAN CITIZENS INVOLVED. REF (B) DESCRIBES AT LENGTH SOME OF THE PROBLEMS WE HAD IN GETTING THIS WORD THROUGH TO THE FRENCH AUTHORITIES.

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C. THE SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME OF THE TWA HIJACKING CONFIRMED THE WISDOM OF THE DECISION TO TALK AND TO REASON WITH THE HIJACKERS IN AN EFFORT TO AVOID HAVING TO RESOLVE THE DILEMMA THROUGH A SHOW OF FORCE; THIS WAS CERTAINLY NOT NEGOTIATING, BUT THE SUSPICIONS OF THE MEDIA ON THAT SCORE SUGGEST THAT THERE IS A GREY AREA HERE DISTINGUISHING DISCUSSION FROM NEGOTIATION THAT MIGHT USEFULLY BE THE SUBJECT OF MORE PRECISE DEFINITION. WHAT THIS ALL POINTS TO IS THE SELF-EVIDENT TRUTH THAT EACH HIJACKING IS DIFFERENT, AND MAY REQUIRE DIFFERENCES, PERHAPS SUBTLE, IN THE MANNER OF COPING WITH AND RESOLVING IT. IN THE PRESENT INSTANCE, FOR EXAMPLE, THE REPORT OF A SECOND BOMB IN A DENSELY POPULATED AREA IN THE US OFFERED THE AMBASSADOR LEVERAGE WITH THE GOF WHICH MIGHT NOT BE AVAILABLE IN OTHER CASES.

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